



Air Force News

Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile nears production

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EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AFPN) -- The Air Force is looking to develop more lethal and cost-effective weapon systems as it embraces the expeditionary concept and cultivates business reform measures.

The Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile program office in the Air Armament Center's armament product directorate at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., is supporting that aim.

The JASSM program -- a joint effort between the Air Force and Navy with the Air Force as the lead service -- promises a long-range, air-launched cruise missile that will destroy high-value and heavily defended targets without putting aircrews at risk.

"The weapon's primary role is against targets that require precision accuracy," said Terry Little, program director for the JASSM's joint program office. "Typically, these are heavily defended targets: things like surface-to-air missile sites, command and control, air operations centers, and targets critical to the enemy's ability to fight."

The JASSM program office is working to bring the missile into active inventory by 2002. The program will enter the engineering and manufacturing development phase in November.

"One of this program's initiatives is an early focus on manufacturing," Little said. "It's an integral part of our design phase. That's the way you have to do it if you want to be able to have a low-cost solution and way to address manufacturing costs until you are in production."

Supporting the expeditionary approach, JASSM integrates technologies Air Force leaders say are critical to the aerospace forces of the 21st century. These include stealth, precision, versatility and a long-range capability, which will enable pilots in combat to fire the missile from outside enemy air defenses.

The F-16 and B-52 will be the first two aircraft to serve as delivery platforms for the JASSM. The B-1 and B-2 will follow, with money and priority determining whether other aircraft will receive JASSM integration.

Program officials said the missile will promote cost-efficiency by providing combat aircraft the capacity to destroy more targets with fewer sorties. Bombers will be able to carry up to 24 missiles, each with a different target.

"The accuracy of the missile is such that, in general, you do not need multiple missions to kill a target," said Little.

The missile's capabilities may affect the political considerations of war planning, said Sharon Brooks, JASSM deputy program director. Specifically, the missile's long-range dimension may mean the United States will have less need to negotiate basing and fly-over agreements with foreign countries.

"The JASSM gives us more flexibility," Brooks said. "The commanders in chief need to have flexibility in their ability to prosecute a conflict. The more negotiated agreements are necessary for us to base or overfly, the more difficult it is to prosecute any conflict."

The program is emerging as a model for acquisition reform. The program office's objective is to keep the cost below \$400,000 per missile in '95 dollars, with the threshold being \$700,000. Estimates are now at \$300,000 per missile, said Little.

The Air Force awarded a contract to Lockheed Martin in April. The contract authorized Lockheed Martin to complete the second part of the program definition and risk reduction phase and, when directed, to produce a minimum of 2,400 missiles. (Courtesy of Air Force Materiel Command News Service)

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